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## Book Reviews

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*Plutarch.* Von RUDOLF HIRZEL. Heft IV. *Das Erbe der Alten.*

Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912. Pp.

ii+211. M. 5.

Rudolf Hirzel's latest work is worthy of the reputation enjoyed by this brilliant and prolific scholar. The opening chapters, which treat of Plutarch's historical and geographical background, of the man, his political attitude, his *φιλανθρωπία*, personal influence, writings, and his position as a historian comprise about one-third of the book, and easily surpass any other introduction to Plutarch's life and works. Especially felicitous is the running comparison with Hesiod and Pindar in relation to family feeling, to the Delphic cult, to travel, to the home land, to the sea, to princes, their views on womankind, and the richness of their style in figures and fables. The remainder of the book is devoted to a masterly sketch of the history of Plutarch's influence upon subsequent generations down to the present age. This is, of course, the more original contribution, and it will especially attract the attention of scholars. A brief outline may give some idea of the richness of content.

Plutarch's memory was long cherished in Chaironeia, and in the next few centuries, Gellius, Favorinus, Galen, Marcus Aurelius, Julian, Eunapios and Himerios are the ones most obviously influenced by him. His fine sense for ethical values, his lovingkindness, his avoidance of polemic against the new faith made him most congenial to the early Christian Fathers, of whom Basil, John Chrysostom, and Clement owed most to him. The lower cultural standard of western Christianity preferred Suetonius as biographer and polyhistor. Plutarch was but a name in the Middle Ages, and many knew not even that. Dante and Chaucer never mention him. He was indeed remembered, if at all, for the false tradition that made him the teacher of Trajan of pious memory. In Byzantium he was well known, especially to Photios, Psellos, Plaundes, and kindled the enthusiastic admiration of Johannes Tzetzes, but Byzantine historiography, despite the fact that there was no lack of striking personalities from time to time upon the throne, reverted to the chronicle style of composition. Unlike Suetonius, Plutarch established no literary tradition with his biographies.

Despite the cult of the great men of antiquity to whom the Italian Renaissance paid its devotions, Plutarch was but a candle to the sun of Plato. Perhaps he was too close to the end of his own age, and his gaze turned too consistently backward for this period of "the passion of life." Petrarch barely knew him; Macchiavelli only slightly; Tasso was his only conspicuous devotee,

and Raphael does not include him in the "School of Athens." In the North it was different. Melanchthon, Zwingli, and Erasmus were great admirers, as well as Fischart and Hans Sachs. In France, the home of his greatest triumphs, Rabelais was his first disciple, Montaigne his greatest, Amyot, with his classic translation, the most serviceable. It was here that he became the teacher of princes, especially of the heroes of the religious wars and of the French kings, above all of Henry the Fourth. Corneille, Racine, and Lafontaine carried on his inspiration. It was from this period that the word "parallel" (from his *Parallel Lives*) came in French to be used of any resemblance, from which language it passed over into English and German.

North's translation of the *Lives* (after Amyot) made them a household book in England. Shakespeare and Bacon were his most eminent admirers, the former of the *Lives*, the latter principally of the *Morals*. Hirzel defends Shakespeare against the charge brought by Voltaire and Taine, of vulgarizing Plutarch, and finds in him "the most brilliant and profound interpreter" of a "kindred spirit." Ben Jonson was cool. The English kings, unlike their French cousins, showed no interest. Dryden of course appreciated him, but the Old Testament and not Plutarch furnished the Puritans with their hero-types. The same period finds little interest in Germany, Switzerland, and Holland, a condition that remained unchanged until the work of Daniel Wytttenbach, of Pestalozzi, and of Gottfried Keller.

The early eighteenth century had little interest in heroes, though Frederick the Great, like the prince Condé, carried his Plutarch with him to the field. Pope had no concern and Voltaire attacked him. Lessing thought little of him, calling him once "The Greek Voltaire," a phrase which would have disgusted the latter. Rousseau marks a new epoch. "Plutarch," says he, "was the first reading of my youth, it will be the last of my old age. He is almost the only author whom I have never read without profit." Franklin read him with pleasure, and Plutarch's was certainly the greatest influence from antiquity upon the French Revolution—indeed Macaulay would make him responsible for it, which would be enough to explain his own dislike for the biographer. The young Napoleon at Brienne devoured the *Lives*. Jean Paul and Joh. Müller yield scarcely even to Rousseau in their admiration. Schiller was enamored and made excerpts. Goethe was always respectful, and Plutarch's *Morals* were the last reading before his death. Leopardi and Alfieri were to a less degree affected.

The new humanism preached by Winckelmann, influencing W. von Humboldt, Wolf, and the younger generation of philologists, damaged Plutarch's reputation, looking as it did to the ancients solely for their art and being indifferent to their ethical values. The Romanticists were in the main uninterested. Mitford, Macaulay, and Poe were positively hostile. Carlyle, for all his hero-worship, remained singularly unaffected. The middle of the nineteenth century saw a return, however. Gottfried-Hermann's scholars did much for Plutarch in Germany, and now that the mania for *Quellenuntersu-*

*chungen* is overpast, his star is in the ascendant. Richard Wagner enjoyed him. Mommsen admired him and felt his influence, as did Treitschke, and Jakob Burckhardt. In England Trench's fine essay has done good service; in America Emerson was a most devoted apostle; in France the great critic Sainte-Beuve speaks of him as the "grand et incomparable biographe."

The book is written in a free and graceful style, tinged with a fine enthusiasm for its subject—which at times verges on partiality—this last, however, as Byron remarked of Mitford, perhaps a virtue for making one "write in earnest" (p. 182, n. 6). Its only weakness is a tendency occasionally to strain the evidence. Thus, for example, the fact that Tieck wrote Sylla and not Sulla hardly proves even a Greek original, for this vulgar Latin spelling is found in many old and excellent manuscripts, was accepted in the celebrated "Orthographiae Ratio" of Manutius Aldus, defended by such a scholar as Casaubon (on Suetonius, *Jul. Caes.* § 1), and long followed in editions of Latin authors. Furthermore, it is more likely that the account of Charles I having seen the ghost of Strafford the night before Naseby, if influenced at all by older stories, goes back directly to the famous case of Richard III before Bosworth Field rather than to that of Brutus before Philippi. Again, it is hardly correct to say that Shakespeare's "Roman heroes are better drawn than those from Homer, who in *Troilus and Cressida* appear rather more like caricatures," for Shakespeare drew his *Troilus* and *Cressida* from Chaucer, Lydgate, and other mediaeval versions of the Troy legend, and not from Homer at all, from whom it is doubtful if anything but the figure of Thersites is taken, and that is successful enough.

Misprints are rare; the most significant that I have noticed are *Weit* for *Welt* (p. 11); *preclaris* for *praeclaris* (*claris*?) (p. 30, n. 1); Thirlwall for Thirlwall (p. 150).

Those who are interested in the vitality of classical studies will do well to consider the advisability of reading more of Plutarch's *Lives*, one of the few world's books, than is commonly done. Professional philologists have always been cool—Scaliger, Lipsius, Bentley, Wolf, Gibbon; but men of the world and of affairs like Henry IV, Prince Condé, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Frederick the Great, Rousseau, Franklin, Napoleon, Gordon, have been his warmest admirers. It is true that the ancients are incomparable in form, and that Plutarch is not the greatest here, but those who are equally interested in content and in ethical values are justified in emphasizing those phases of classical studies which their own age is best prepared to understand. "I care not," cried Joh. Müller in a moment of enthusiasm, "had I a son who did not know whether Charlemagne lived before or after Cicero, if only he had the spirit that lives in these biographies!" (p. 175). It will be a dark day for the classics should men come generally to believe that they represent merely a barren cult of form and of erudition.

W. A. OLDFATHER